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AFGHANISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Trained Volunteers Provide Rapid Earthquake Assistance

A real time training on “Emergency Preparedness and Response” in Kunar during the earthquake helped to save lives.



Photo: USAID/IMC

IMC distributes relief supplies, such as blankets, clothing, emergency shelter materials, and household items, at the district level in Kunar Province

On October 26, 2015, a magnitude 7.5 earthquake struck northeastern Afghanistan, affecting 16 of the country's 34 provinces, as well as parts of Pakistan. The earthquake left more than 100,000 people in Afghanistan in need of some form of humanitarian assistance, with Kunar and Nangarhar provinces experiencing the highest number of fatalities and injuries.

When the earthquake struck, the International Medical Corps (IMC) — USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) partner—was conducting an emergency preparedness and response training course in the Asmar District of Kunar Province. As people rushed from their houses in search of safety and assistance, community volunteers attending the training were ready to help.

Although the timing of the training was fortuitous, USAID has purposefully supported IMC to strengthen the capacity of Afghan communities to respond to natural disasters. Since 2011, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) has provided IMC more than \$7.7 million to implement the Emergency Preparedness and Response in Afghanistan (EPRA) program, which has trained more than 19,000 community volunteers in Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, and Nuristan provinces to provide first aid, conduct search-and-rescue operations, and perform damage and loss assessments. USAID/OFDA support also enabled IMC to provide search-and-rescue tools and first aid kits to community volunteers, allowing them to provide immediate assistance rather than waiting for external help to reach affected communities. Additionally, IMC used USAID/OFDA funding to pre-position relief supplies, such as blankets, clothing, emergency shelter materials, and household items, at the district level.

Following the October 26 earthquake, an IMC-trained emergency response team in Asmar utilized the tools provided through the EPRA program, including pickaxes and shovels, to rescue people from a collapsed house and rubble piles. The team also cleared a stream channel blocked by an earthquake-induced landslide, preventing a potential shortage in irrigation

water. Additionally, trained volunteers in Kunar and Nangarhar collected earthquake-related casualty and damage information and reported back to Afghanistan Disaster Management Authority provincial offices, contributing to a timely and effective national response.

Collectively, USAID/Afghanistan, USAID/OFDA, and USAID's Office of Food for Peace are currently responding within the broader Afghan led response in Afghanistan to the ongoing complex emergency. Several partners, including IMC, also receive funding to respond to natural disasters and work with Afghan officials and local communities to bolster natural disaster preparedness and response capacity.